

A key facet of Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke's lobbying campaign to be reappointed was his extensive outreach to members of Congress.

Throughout his three-and-a-half-year reign, Bernanke has aggressively courted lawmakers on Capitol Hill, meeting with many members on both sides of the aisle. While some legislators have balked at Bernanke's policies while heading the Federal Reserve, most of them praise how he has interacted with the legislative branch.

"We won't always agree, but Bernanke respects what our role is," Rep. Michael Capuano (D-Mass.) told The Hill last year.

Some Democrats were initially wary of Bernanke, who was appointed by President George W. Bush in 2006 and was tapped for a second term on Tuesday by President Barack Obama.

In the wake of the Democrats' takeover of Congress in 2007, Bernanke won many Democrats over, including powerful Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass). The Financial Services Committee chairman has praised the Fed chairman for being to the left of Alan Greenspan, Bernanke's predecessor.

Specifically, Democrats have noted that Bernanke's position on taxes is more Democrat-friendly than Greenspan's was.

Yet it is Bernanke's mild-mannered approach to dealing with Congress, not his policymaking, that has won him admiration among liberals and conservatives on Capitol Hill.

Bernanke's open-door policy with members of Congress, and his ability to engage in small talk with those lawmakers, have proven to be invaluable.

When **Rep. John Campbell (R-Calif.)** headed to the Federal Reserve for a breakfast with the chairman, Bernanke greeted him at the door. During a private meeting with Rep. Patrick McHenry (R-N.C.), South Carolina native Bernanke discussed Southern history. Capuano and Bernanke chatted about their mutual love for the Boston Red Sox.

Between January and June, Bernanke had more than two dozen meetings with lawmakers, according to his daily calendars obtained by The Hill under the Freedom of Information Act.

The calendars show Bernanke meeting with a nearly even number of Democrats and Republicans. He has met prominent lawmakers, including Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.), House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and the chairmen and ranking members on the House Financial Services Committee and Senate Banking Committee. But Bernanke has also met with rank-and-file members who do not hold direct jurisdiction of the Federal Reserve.

"Members of Congress have appreciated and widely acknowledged the fact that he is a direct and straight talker," said Rob Nichols, president of the Financial Services Forum. "He has a clear, candid and crisp communications style. This style and transparency has been positively acknowledged in the halls of Congress."

Bernanke also used the media in his bid to secure another term. He appeared on "60 Minutes" and PBS this year, while also delivering a speech at the National Press Club in February.

The Fed chairman also kept in close contact with key Obama administration officials in 2009, holding regular meetings with Larry Summers, the president's chief economic adviser, who was rumored to replace him. He also met with Obama in March and again in June.

Bernanke did have some tense moments with members, especially during congressional testimony on various government bailouts. Bernanke critics include Rep. Ron Paul (R-Texas) and Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), who have introduced legislation to subject the Federal Reserve to audits.

And during a Financial Services Committee hearing in March, Rep. Don Manzullo (R-Ill.)

pressed Bernanke on the AIG bailout, demanding a yes or no answer.

A frustrated Bernanke replied, "It is a poorly posed question."

Lawmakers from both parties have been critical of the central bank's handling of the crisis. Some Republicans in particular have become increasingly critical of the bank's efforts to bail out private companies.

But Democratic support for Bernanke has improved markedly, according to an April Gallup poll. A year ago, 40 percent of Democrats were confident in Bernanke; 64 percent now say they are. By comparison, only 36 percent of Republicans and 44 percent of independents are confident in Bernanke in 2009, according to the Gallup poll.

Still, while poll numbers show public concern with the Fed as an institution, Bernanke may benefit from having lower name recognition.

According to an April poll conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, only 45 percent of those surveyed could identify Bernanke.

Confirmation votes for Fed chairmen have rarely been contentious. Democrats and Republicans have raised concerns of the Fed's handling of the financial crisis and the Obama administration's plans to empower the central bank with oversight of "systemic risk" in the financial sector.

But Democrats and some Republican senators on Tuesday were quick to offer their support. Democratic Sens. Chris Dodd (Conn.) and Charles Schumer (N.Y.) praised Bernanke while recognizing questions about the central bank. Sen. Bob Corker (R-Tenn.) said Bernanke has "earned the right" to see the crisis through and "lead the Federal Reserve through these volatile times."

Members of the upper chamber who are critical of the Fed will likely use the confirmation hearing before the Banking Committee to slam the Fed.

"We should closely examine the impact ad hoc decisionmaking had on the financial markets during the crisis. I remain convinced that a thoughtful, more deliberative approach would have led to a better result than the panicked response the regulators chose," said Sen. Richard Shelby (Ala.), the top Republican on the Senate Banking Committee.

Doug Elliott, a former investment banker and fellow at the Brookings Institution, said that the confirmation hearing will be far different from Bernanke's last.

"We've never had a Fed chairman going up for confirmation at such a controversial time," Elliott said. "I do think he'll get a significant majority, but I think he'll feel pretty beat up."